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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-third year

Identical letters dated 27 December 2008 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

It is with deepest regret that I inform you that Israel, the occupying Power, has unleashed a deadly rampage in the Gaza Strip today, resulting in the deaths of over 200 Palestinians, with many innocent children and women among the dead and wounded. In this regard, in flagrant violation and grave breach of the relevant rules and provisions of international law, Israeli F-16 warplanes and Apache helicopters dropped over 100 bombs on dozens of locations in the Gaza Strip in the mid-morning hours of 27 December 2008 (local time).

It is also being reported that more than 600 Palestinians were seriously wounded by the Israeli occupying forces in this latest round of brutal attacks. The hospitals in Gaza, which are already facing critical shortages of medical supplies and decaying equipment as a result of the ongoing Israeli siege of Gaza, are now exerting all efforts possible under such circumstances to treat those wounded in the attacks. It should be noted that for weeks before this latest campaign of death and destruction, Israel ensured the complete crippling of all vital sectors in the Gaza Strip, specifically, medical services and international humanitarian aid agencies, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, by banning much-needed aid from coming into the Gaza Strip. The situation in Gaza is catastrophic, and Israel, the occupying Power, is fully responsible for the deaths of scores of Palestinians who might not receive the medical treatment they need as a result of this criminal siege. Meanwhile, the rest of the population in the area, gripped by panic and fear and already suffering humanitarian hardship, are reported to be hiding in their homes. But even there they know they are not safe from the military strikes of the occupying Power.

The Palestinian leadership, under President Mahmoud Abbas, has declared a state of mourning and has expressed its sheer outrage at this savagery and holds the Government of Israel fully accountable for this irresponsible and criminal onslaught, which threatens to plunge the entire region into violence and hatred. It

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must be recalled that what we are witnessing now is the horrific materialization of the repeated threats made by several Israeli officials over the past months, who have threatened to launch large-scale military attacks against the Palestinian people under their occupation in the Gaza Strip. Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak stated that this latest aggression, "Operation Cast Lead", would continue for "as long as necessary". Such threats, combined with the actual killing of civilians and the destruction being perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power, which must be viewed with the utmost seriousness and vehemently condemned, require immediate action by the international community, including the Security Council.

Civilians under foreign occupation are entitled to protection under international humanitarian law. Moreover, it must be clearly and firmly reiterated that international humanitarian law absolutely prohibits reprisals against a civilian population. Real and immediate measures must be taken to avert the killing of even more innocent people as well as the uncontrollable spiral of the situation to irreversible depths, wherein the vicious and deadly cycle of violence will only worsen.

Given the grim situation just outlined and the humanitarian disaster that has befallen Gaza, the Palestinian leadership calls for an emergency meeting of the Security Council to address this dramatic deterioration of the situation on the ground in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. At this time of crisis, we reiterate our call upon the international community to uphold international law in all circumstances and upon the Council to uphold its responsibilities under the Charter and to undertake immediate measures to address this grave situation being faced by the Palestinian people. Continued silence and paralysis will surely bring only more death and destruction.

The present letter is in follow-up to our previous 323 letters to you regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 5 December 2008 (A/ES-10/427-S/2008/768), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council. (As all the victims have not yet been identified, their names will be included in the annex to a future letter.)

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of Palestine